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ABSTRACT

Recent polls have shown that the more education a person has, the less likely he or she is to be proud to be an American. What school children learn today about their country and political system may leave them confused and lacking conviction. Much of this change to neutrality in citizenship education regarding political systems spills over from the values education movement. The change is accurately chronicled in textbooks, which often fail to communicate the basic values of the Western tradition. When the fundamental principles that undergird the political system are not focused on, government is trivialized and citizenship is deprived of the moral and social meaning that engender loyalty. Loyalty is at the very core of human values, allowing social bonds to exist. Adolescents are naturally more concerned about freedom than about loyalty; yet if they can be taught to feel that they are part of a community, loyalty can grow. Textbooks will change to reemphasize good citizenship only if parents and teachers place greater emphasis on patriotism. Reviving patriotic songs and poems, the pledge of allegiance to flag, and the celebration of national holidays and heroes, and by teaching the obligations that freedom entails--including simple private observance of the law--may be the best way to introduce children to patriotism. (DCS)

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Citizenship Education: Recovering a Lost Dimension

Linda Chavez

Recent opinion polls show that the more education a person has, the less likely he or she is to be proud to be an American.[1] What causes this inverse relationship between years of formal schooling and love of country? Clearly, a change has taken place over the last ten years in the way in which our schools teach civics and that change may have contributed to this inversion. At best, what children learn in school today about their country and its political system may leave them confused and lacking conviction. Doubt seems to have replaced patriotism as a virtue to be inculcated.

Much of the change that has taken place in citizenship education has spilled over from the values education movement of the last decade and a half. Neutrality—whether it be about right and wrong or democracy and tyranny—is the dominant theme. Textbooks illustrate this change more acutely than nearly any other source, in part because textbook publishers must respond to market pressures more than must any other segment of the education community. Textbooks rarely precipitate trends in education, but they fairly accurately chronicle them.

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In one of the most frequently used high school texts, ***American Political Behavior***, authors Howard Mehlinger and John Patrick promise "As a safeguard against biased presentation of information and propaganda, students of political behavior must learn skills of critical thinking and social scientific inquiry. . . . Thus, we have tried to design lessons aimed at tracking the skills of using evidence and logic to substantiate factual claims and to consider value claims rationally."[2] What follows in Messrs. Mehlinger and Patrick's book aims at neutrality but delivers confusion. In one chapter, students learn that countries have different political cultures just as they have different languages and customs. "The concepts of democracy and autocracy provide one way to look at, or interpret, differences in political culture and behavior," say the authors, who then go on to describe some of the differences between the two systems. But while the authors seem sure of the relative demerits of autocracy—"Ideas are not freely debated. . . . Individuals who dissent from the 'party line' may go to prison or be killed."—they seem much more cautious about the merits of democracy. Each word used to describe the democratic system is qualified: "In the United States ***most people think*** that democracy is good. . . ." [Emphasis added] "Below are some political beliefs that ***most people would call*** democratic." [Emphasis added] "When trying to decide whether a political culture or government is democratic, remember that among the nations of the world there are ***no perfect democracies***. Political cultures or governments are ***more or less democratic*** in terms of the standards of majority rule and protection of individual rights." [Emphasis added][3] Why the timidity in proclaiming the superiority of our system of government or even its claim to the democratic ideal?

The Mehlinger and Patrick book is hardly unique. Jeane Kirkpatrick noted several years ago in a monograph entitled ***Values in An American Textbook***, that another popular textbook, ***American Government in Action*** by Miriam Rober Resnik and Lillian Herlick Nerenberg,[4] fails "to communicate the basic values of the Western tradition."

Among Kirkpatrick's criticisms of the book is that it concentrates too heavily on administrative arrangements in government to the detriment of the fundamental principles that undergird the political system. "When government is reduced to a set of administrative arrangements designed for the mutual convenience of those residing within specified boundaries," she says, "it becomes impossible to understand the importance of politics to human history. When government is reduced to a commercial relationship and citizens to customers, the effect is still worse. Not only is government trivialized, but citizenship is deprived of moral and social meaning."[5]

It is precisely this moral and social meaning that can engender loyalty. Rabbi Hillel framed the fundamental question for those who ask why it is important to be loyal: "If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I?" Loyalty is at the very core of human values; without it, no social bond exists between men.

Loyalty requires that we recognize a relationship to our fellow man. It is incompatible with selfishness or self-centeredness; it relegates the "me" to second place. Perhaps for this reason, loyalty is more difficult to teach today than it has ever been. We are used to being told, and telling others, "You're number one," "You've got to think of yourself," "You decide what's best for you and then do it" that we have forgotten that each of us is a part of something greater than ourselves—a family, a community, a nation—to which we owe our loyalty.

Adolescents absorbed in the quest for discovery of self present perhaps the greatest challenge in teaching about loyalty. Teenagers are more concerned with freedom than they are with loyalty; freedom appeals to their sense of individuality and their desire for liberty—or more accurately, liberation from the constraints of parents, school, and adult authority in general. But if adolescents can be taught to feel that they are part of community, not just individuals pursuing their own gains, the seeds of loyalty can be sown.

Vincent Reed, former superintendent of schools of the

District of Columbia, describes what can take place when students tie their own self-esteem to their pride in the community school. The following exchange occurred when a Department of Education official accompanied Reed on a visit to the District's Woodson High School:

"This Department of Education official and I went in to talk to the students in a math class at the school, and the first thing he said was that he had been to high schools all over the country and this was the first one he'd been in where there was no grafitti on the walls. And he asked the students if they could tell him why it was that their school was so clean. A girl raised up her hand, and she was hostile. 'Did you come here expecting to see grafitti?' she asked. 'And if so, why?' Of course, she was hinting that he expected that because the kids were black. Well, the fellow was so flustered that he mumbled through something and when we got out in the hall, he said, 'Well, I'll never make that mistake again.' The point is, the kids were proud that their school was so clean." Loyalty to the school in this instance meant keeping the school grafitti-free.

From his own youthful experience Reed recalls, "We used to get a grade in citizenship. That was always the first grade my parents looked at.

"Youngsters aren't born with the knowledge of what a good citizen is," says Reed. "You've got to talk about it and give them examples of good citizenship. Teachers and others in the school should practice good citizenship, too. I think we have to go back to being concerned about citizenship. It affects behavior and improves grades."[6]

The relationship between what children learn from textbooks and formal teaching and what they observe in the character of the school is an important one. Textbooks will change only if greater emphasis is placed on patriotism by parents and teachers. Until that time, what can parents and teachers do to try to instill the civic virtues in children?

A revival of the old formulae of patriotic songs and poems, of the recitation of the pledge of allegiance to the flag, of celebration of national holidays and national heroes that were the universal staple of American classrooms only

a few years ago is still perhaps the best way of introducing young children to patriotism. Older children will require more depth in their training, however.

One of the most useful approaches in dealing with children at this age may be to try to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the obligations that freedom entails. Rousseau described the change that took place when man went from living in a state of nature, where he lived unfettered by law or custom, to living in society, where he "exchanged natural independence for freedom, the power to destroy others for the enjoyment of (his) own security. . . ."[7] But such an exchange was not without its obligations. Rousseau's words may serve as a partial response to those who question why they should, under any circumstances, be called on to defend their country: "Their very lives, which they have pledged to the state, are always protected by it; and even when they risk their lives to defend the state, what more are they doing by giving back what they have received from the state. . . . Assuredly, all must now fight in case of need for their country, but at least no one has any longer to fight for himself. And is there not something to be gained by running, for the sake of the guarantee of safety, a few of those risks we should each have to face alone if we were deprived of that assurance?"[8]

Loyalty to country may inspire acts of courage, but students need to learn that patriotism can be exemplified in private observance of the law as well as in public displays of heroism. Socrates' refusal to disobey the laws of Athens, even when his refusal meant that he would face death, is recounted by his most famous pupil, Plato, in the dialogue "Crito."

Socrates gives eloquent expression to the need to obey the laws of the nation as much when they are inconvenient as when they are convenient. Obedience to the law, however, is not blind obedience. It requires moral judgment and adherence to the principles of right and wrong.

> Are you so wise that you failed to see that something else is more precious than father and mother and all your ancestors besides—your country, something more reverend, more holy,

of greater value, as the gods judge, and any men that have sense? You must honour and obey and conciliate your country when angry, more than a father; you must either persuade her, or do whatever she commands; you must bear in quiet anything she bids you bear, be it stripes or prison; of if she leads you to war, to be wounded or to die, this you must do, and it is right; you must not give way or retreat or leave your post, but in war and in court and everywhere you must do whatever city and country commands, or else convince her where the right lies. Violence is not allowed against mother or father, much less against your country.[9]

The failure to instill a sense of loyalty to one's country and the obligations that entail can have devastating consequences. The United States has one of the lowest voter participation rates of any free society and the long-term consequences of voter apathy may bode badly for the future of our democracy. The failure of so many young men to register for the draft may portend dire consequences for our ability to defend democracy from outside threats as well; at no time in history including at the height of the anti-war movement of the 1960s was failure to comply with the law as high as it is now.[10] Perhaps the greatest threat, however, comes from disaffection and alienation that this lack of commitment breeds in certain individuals. The story of Christopher Boyce, who sold United States surveillance secrets to the USSR, is a chilling example.

CBS correspondent Ed Bradley interviewed Boyce and others for the television show "60 Minutes."[11] In vivid detail the following excerpts illustrate the nadir of disloyalty to which some persons can sink:

Bradley: Last week, British spy Geoffrey Prime went to jail for giving away the most sensitive British and American secrets. Five years ago, so did this man, Christopher Boyce.

What he had given away to the Soviets—or, more accurately, sold to the Soviets—was the secret that our satellite surveillance system was telling us just about everything the Russians were up to. Having learned that we were listening in, the Soviets started putting out false information. What that did was to make our intelligence gathering satellites virtually useless.

Boyce is now serving forty years for espionage at Marion

Federal Penitentiary. Recently, we talked with him about why he and his partner, Dalton Lee, did it.

You willingly turned that information over to the Russians?

Christopher Boyce: You bet.

Bradley: In the courts of this land, you've been tried and convicted of espionage.

Boyce: Right.

Bradley: You are a traitor.

Boyce: Mm-hmm.

Bradley: Does that bother you?

Boyce: Well, if you qualify it as a traitor to what. I think that you can't protect any freedoms or liberties behind stockpiles of nuclear weapons and chemical and biological weapons, and I think that the United States government is eventually going to involve the United States and the rest of the world in a nuclear war; and I don't mind being called a traitor to the United States government at all, no. I think the United States government needs a few more traitors. Humanity needs a few more.

Bradley: Sen. Daniel Moynihan, the vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, believes that what Boyce and Lee turned over to the Russians had a major impact on the SALT talks. Senator, how would you describe to the average American just what happened as a result of Boyce and Lee?

Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan: Well, basically, with respect to the satellite systems that were compromised, they made them, temporarily, at least, useless to us because the Soviets could block them. And the fear that that would happen, had happened, permeated the Senate and, as much as any one thing, was responsible for the failure of the SALT treaty; and, if you think, as I do, that the breakdown of our arms negotiations with the Soviets is an ominous event, then nothing quite so awful has happened to our country as the escapade of these two young men.

Bradley: All of that information was accurate material? (Moynihan nodding)

Bradley: It's difficult to understand why Boyce held such a grudge against his country. He had so much of what this nation can bestow on its young men. He grew up here in Palos Verdes, one of the wealthiest communities in this country. He was the oldest of nine children in a very closely knit family. His father had left a career with the FBI for a job in private industry that paid a lot more money. Boyce was said to be sensitive, intelligent and a devout Catholic. . . .

With the help of his father, twenty-one-year-old Chris Boyce, a drop-out from three colleges, with no real work experience, was able to land a job here at TRW as a security clerk. The pay was only $140 a week, and it would seem to be an insignificant job; but within just a few months, it would lead Boyce to another job, this one in the "black vault"—or code room—a facility so sensitive, so top secret, that only eight other people with the highest government security clearances had regular access. Now, on the surface, the "black vault" would seem to be completely secure. To get in, you had to go past an array of guards, television monitors and check points; but how did Chris Boyce find that security?

Boyce: I guess there was no security, like the codes are supposed to be destroyed each day, but we used to just throw 'em in the corner, and there was a large blender to put the codes in, and you would blend them down to mush. Well, we—they—never used that to destroy codes with. We made daiquiris in it.

Bradley: A few months after getting the job, Boyce started selling the highly classified material to the Russians. His partner in the crime: his old friend, Dalton Lee, used the money paid by the Soviets to finance his illegal drug business. Boyce would photograph the secret material with his small Minox-B camera, give it to Dalton, and Dalton Lee would hand it to the Soviet KGB agents in Mexico City.

Bradley: If you had the chance to do it all over again, you'd do the same thing that would put you right back here?

Boyce: Only better.

There is no way of knowing whether or not Christopher Boyce's defection from the moral community could have been prevented by better training as a child. Indeed, the details of his childhood—devotion to his church for example—would lead one to assume that he had loyalties to the major institutions in his young life. However, it is clear that his sense of early loyalty to one institution did not generalize into what Philosopher Andrew Oldenquist has called "loyalty patriotism."[12] Oldenquist illustrates the idea of loyalty patriotism with the following example:

> Suppose that we witness the following scene. A family is vacationing at the beach; as the father walks up on the pier he sees his daughter and her acquaintance fall out of their canoe, swim for a minute in different directions, and then both begin

to drown. Being sure he can save only one, he lets his daughter drown and saves the other girl. Asked why, he says either (a) he was ever so slightly surer of being able to reach the acquaintance in time, or (b) the acquaintance was well on her way to being a brilliant scientist, bound to contribute more to the general happiness than his daughter, and, given that he could not save both, the choice he made produced more positive value. What do we think of this father? Would we want to shake his hand, or tell the story in the local paper as a moral lesson? Is he not a great fool, an object of pity and contempt? Indeed, this is the kind of incident we are embarrassed even to talk about, unlike cases of moral heroism or gross selfishness.[13]

In fact, says Oldenquist, "The contempt we feel toward traitors is not unlike what we feel toward the father who lets his daughter drown."[14]

Teaching students about loyalty may begin with making them aware of the duties and obligations they have toward others. Loyalty of family members to each other includes love and respect, along with duty and obligation. The story of Penelope's fidelity to Odysseus throughout his twenty-year absence is a quiet tale of perseverance of the loyalty between husband and wife. A more dramatic story of family loyalty, recounted by E. W. Cassels in a boy scout book, tells of the young soldier who risks his life to bring to safety his wounded brother, only to have the boy die when they reach their own lines.[15] Family loyalty can involve sacrifice and courage, or it can be as simple as the tale of Ruth and Naomi, in which the widowed Ruth pledges her steadfastness to her mother-in-law, Naomi, with the affirmation, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

Children are first and foremost members of their families; but as they grow older, they form new associations and their allegiances expand. Youngsters can learn about loyalty as members of a sports team or as boy or girl scouts; they can learn about loyalty in school assemblies, at pep rallies, or on the debating team. Helping children to form allegiances will better prepare them to become loyal citizens and to understand the duties and responsibilities that citizenship requires.

Teaching about loyalty should be one of the funda-

mentals of education. Without a sense that they are members of a community, students will be ill-equipped to accept the obligations that school and society impose. Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization* recalls that Charles Darwin chose conscience as the most impressive distinction between animals and men. "In its higher development, conscience is social consciousness—the feeling of the individual that he belongs to a group, and owes it some measure of loyalty and consideration. Morality is the cooperation of the part with the whole, and of each group with some larger whole. Civilization would be impossible without it."[16] Teachers who shirk their responsibility to teach loyalty and students who fail to learn its lessons will find no easy answer to Rabbi Hillel's question.

Notes

1. Everett Carll Ladd, Jr. "What the Polls Tell Us," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 1979.
2. Howard D. Mehlinger and John J. Patrick, *American Political Behavior* (Lexington, Mass.: Ginn & Company, 1980), pp. 102-104.
3. Ibid.
4. Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Values in an American Government Textbook*, (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1978), p. 17.
5. Ibid., p. 20.
6. Interview with Vincent Reed, 1981.
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract.* (Darby, Pa.: Darby Books, 1980).
8. Ibid.
9. Plato, "Crito," *Great Dialogues of Plato*, translated by W. H. D. Rouse and edited by Philip G. Rouse and Eric H. Warmington, (New York: New American Library, 1956).
10. According to the *New York Times*, at the height of the Vietnam era, compliance with the draft never fell below 98%. Currently, draft registration is at about 94%. *New York Times*, July 20, 1982, p. D21.
11. "60 Minutes" Volume XII, #10, November 21, 1982.
12. Andrew Oldenquist, "Loyalties," *The Journal of Philosophy* LXXIX, #4, April 1982.
13. Ibid., p. 186.
14. Ibid., p. 187.
15. E. W. Cassels, *The Scout Law in Action*, compiled by Walter MacPeek (Nashville: Abington Press, 1966).
16. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 1, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).